

Message from Ian Campbell following a meeting with Jon Eaton

Dear All,

Reading the minutes of the last meeting, I thought I might attempt to shorten the next one a bit by reporting early on our discussions with Jon Eaton, Specialist Development Officer – Governance & Community Buildings for Community Action Suffolk. The unusual nature of our last AGM when the Council put aside a generation of dragooning people to stand for election and instead had healthy competition for posts, meant that the constitutions of both Memorial Hall and Community Council charities didn't look as up-to-date as they needed to be.

Jon has taken away both constitutions to take a good look at (after he returns from leave) and to come back with what he hopes will be useful advice on the best way forward. A number of village hall charities have made changes, driven often by concern about trustee liabilities which I suspect only a few of us will be fully aware of. Despite my incompetence with matters of detail, unlike our Treasurer who reads things thoroughly, the Sports Club is just completing its own change from a CASC to a CIO (Community Amateur Sports Club to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and that means I have had to read things properly for once.

The crux of our change had specific links to assuming the freehold of the Sports Ground but a critical issue for us was the protection a CIO gave to trustees in terms of financial liability in the event that the Club ran into future financial trouble for whatever reason; without that, trustees are all fully liable for deficits. Clearly financial liabilities have not been a consideration when members stand for election and clarification on just how they stand must be an important component in reviewing the constitutions which do not spell out precisely where responsibilities start and finish. The Community Council charity took over the running of the Memorial Hall when the previous trustees ran out of steam. As we seek to improve the Memorial Hall facilities for the benefit of the village, this inevitably means the potential for more income from lettings and perhaps more costs and risks.

It is therefore very timely to conduct this review; it won't be in time for the next meeting of the CC but hopefully not too long afterwards when we can consider the advice from CAS and come back to the committee with recommendations. Any changes that lead us in the direction of a CIO will not be without cost so it won't just be a matter of the best way forward but also if we think that change can be justified financially at this point in our potential last phase with the Hall.

I hope these few words help convey our early understanding of the issues

Ian C